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## THE NATURALISM OF ALPHONSE DAUDET

Few writers have been more beloved than Alphonse Daudet. Even the severest critics of the naturalistic school, under the spell of his personal charm, have been disposed to treat his work with indulgence, if not with actual approval.<sup>1</sup> Yet whenever an attempt has been made to analyze the admirable qualities of his writings, we have been confronted at once with the strangest contradictions.

The most serious ground for debate is Daudet's realism. For example, Ferdinand Brunetière feels that Daudet truly succeeds only where he rises above the realistic method, and uses his imagination.<sup>2</sup> In the opinion of Emile Zola, however, it is just these occasional departures from realism which are the one blot upon the work of the author.<sup>3</sup> It is when he has adhered rigidly to the naturalistic method, declares Zola, that Daudet has sounded the depths of the human heart, and produced novels of universal interest.<sup>4</sup> Brunetière, on the other hand, condemns Daudet precisely for his want of "connaissance du cœur humain."<sup>5</sup> He believes that the eternal human nature revealed in *Gil Blas*, *Manon Lescaut*, *Candide* and *La Nouvelle Héloïse* is conspicuously lacking in the works of our author.

René Doumic, A. de Pontmartin, and E. Montégut, among others, agree substantially with Brunetière in regard to the essential superficiality of Daudet's work. Doumic thinks that Daudet's art succeeds where he would portray simple people, whose character is understood at a glance, while it fails where a profounder analysis is necessary.<sup>6</sup> De Pontmartin emphasizes the abnormality of certain

<sup>1</sup> Emile Zola, *Les Romanciers naturalistes* (1893), p. 316; R. Doumic, *Portraits d'Ecrivains*, Première série (1911), I, 285; F. Brunetière, *Le Roman naturaliste* (1896), p. 358; E. Gilbert, *Le Roman en France pendant le XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (1909), p. 288; A. Hermant, *Essais de critique* (1912), p. 48. The following comment from Jules Lemaitre, *Les Contemporains*, IV (1893), 235, is typical of the opinion of most critics concerning Daudet: "Il est, je crois, l'écrivain le plus sincèrement réaliste qui ait été."

<sup>2</sup> F. Brunetière, *op. cit.*, p. 359.

<sup>3</sup> Emile Zola, *Une Campagne* (1908), p. 393.

<sup>4</sup> Emile Zola, *Les Romanciers naturalistes*, p. 285.

<sup>5</sup> F. Brunetière, "L'Impressionisme dans le roman—*Les Rois en exil* par M. Alphonse Daudet," *Revue des deux mondes*, XXXVI (3d series, 1879), 458, 459.

<sup>6</sup> René Doumic, *Etudes sur la littérature française* (1899), III, 137, 139.

characters of Daudet, which prevents his work from having the universal appeal of the masterpieces referred to by Brunetière.<sup>1</sup> Montégut observes with regret that within the naturalistic school itself there has been a tendency away from the study of human nature in general to the detailing of the exceptional and the pathological. Mme Bovary, for instance, despite her depravity, is still troubled by the voice of conscience.<sup>2</sup> Mme Risler, on the contrary, is a heartless product of artificial modern society.

Opposed to this view is that of Georges Rodenbach, who maintains that Daudet has created numerous "general" types, such as Tartarin, Sapho, Delobelle, the Nabob, Numa Roumestan, and the Immortal; that to determine the type Daudet, like the painter Whistler, required of his subject innumerable poses, which taken together resulted in the *expression d'éternité*.<sup>3</sup> Rodenbach in turn is directly contradicted by Paul Franche who, noting Daudet's inaccuracy in quoting the ritual of the Catholic church, says that the author never demands numerous sittings of his model: an instantaneous photograph satisfies him.<sup>4</sup>

Before venturing to express my own opinion as to the merits of Daudet's realism, it is my purpose to study in some detail the methods by which he composed his stories and novels. The consideration of first importance in such an investigation is the passion which Daudet had for the *histoire vraie*. "Je prenais déjà des notes dans les escaliers," he is reported to have said, on his return from an academic dinner.<sup>5</sup> Doumic assures us that he drew materials not only from his own recollections, but directly from the newspapers; and that so minute were his observations, that he preserved even the gestures and the names of his models.<sup>6</sup> Zola adds that the real constructive work of Daudet lies, not in the creation of char-

<sup>1</sup> A. de Pontmartin, *Souvenirs d'un vieux critique* (1885), VI, 311: "... il faut qu'il [Jean Gaussin] soit idiot, ou bien que son cas, essentiellement pathologique, relève de la médecine expérimentale; ce qui rentre d'ailleurs dans la spécialité du roman naturaliste."

<sup>2</sup> E. Montégut, *Dramaturges et romanciers* (1890), p. 264.

<sup>3</sup> Georges Rodenbach, *L'Elite* (1899), pp. 102, 103.

<sup>4</sup> Paul Franche, *Le Prêtre dans le roman français* (1902), p. 290.

<sup>5</sup> G. Rodenbach, *op. cit.*, pp. 101, 102.

<sup>6</sup> René Doumic, *Portraits d'Ecrivains*, I, 285; *Etudes sur la littérature française*, III, 132; cf. Zola, *Les Romanciers naturalistes*, p. 312. A typical case is that of the prince valaque, spoken of in *Trente ans de Paris*, p. 49, who appears in *Le Nabab*, pp. 153-55.

acters or plots, but in the skilful arrangement of documents.<sup>1</sup> We learn that, like Balzac, he constructed scenarios from his materials, as a preliminary step in the composition of his novels.<sup>2</sup> Jules Lemaitre, however, asserts that his works, by their lack of unity, reflect their notebook origin.<sup>3</sup>

In his methods, Daudet scrupulously followed the example of the Goncourts, with whom he was on intimate terms.<sup>4</sup> Out of an almost filial devotion, he took notes upon the last hours of Edmond de Goncourt, trying to equal if possible the very precise observations which the latter had made upon his dying brother Jules. However, he sat very humbly at the feet of his masters. "Non que j'aie la prétention," he began, "non que j'aie la prétention de rien écrire de vibrant, de pénétrant, comme ces feuillets du *Journal des Goncourt*, juin, 1870, mais ce qu'il a fait pour son frère Jules, ma tendresse d'ami et de témoin veut essayer de le faire pour lui."<sup>5</sup>

Daudet follows his masters occasionally to the extent of putting his notes, without any alteration whatever, into his books.<sup>6</sup> In almost the exact language of the Goncourts, he asserts that "le roman est l'histoire des hommes."<sup>7</sup> He concludes, in accord with them, that the realistic novel must necessarily be sad.

Not only his methods, but also his themes are suggested by the Goncourts, whose influence is evident in more than one story in the little collection entitled *Les Femmes d'artistes*. The exasperating Mme Heurtebise, the former shop-woman, quarrels incessantly with her high-strung literary husband, whom she despises because his profession is not lucrative, and whom she plagues even on the death-bed to which she finally brings him. Marthe, the actress, displays

<sup>1</sup> E. Zola, *Une Campagne* (1908), pp. 385-87.

<sup>2</sup> Alphonse Daudet, *Notes sur la vie* (1899), Preface by Mme Julia A. Daudet, p. xi; cf. Lane Cooper, *Methods and Aims in the Study of Literature* (New York, 1915), p. 94 (quoted from Théophile Gautier, *Honoré de Balzac—Famous French Authors* [New York, 1879], pp. 204-7).

<sup>3</sup> Jules Lemaitre, *Les Contemporains*, IV, 235.

<sup>4</sup> *Notes sur la vie*, p. 124.

<sup>5</sup> *Notes sur la vie*, p. 224. See the concluding pages of the *Journal*, Vol. III.

<sup>6</sup> *Contes du lundi* (1895), p. 98 ("Aux Avant-Postes"): ". . . Tout cela est haché, heurté, bâclé sur le genou, déchiqueté comme un éclat d'obus, mais je le donne tel quel, sans rien changer, sans même me relire. J'aurais trop peur de vouloir inventer, faire intéressant, et de gêner tout;" cf. Edmond et Jules de Goncourt, *Charles Demailly* pp. 74-89.

<sup>7</sup> *Souvenirs d'un homme de lettres*, p. 112; cf. the Goncourts, *Préfaces et manifestes littéraires* (1898), p. 45: ". . . nous écrivions une biographie véridique à la façon d'une biographie d'histoire moderne."

an equally complete lack of sympathy with the work of the writer Charles Demailly, whom she eventually drives insane by her refined torture.<sup>1</sup> La Transtévérine finally dominates the household of her artist husband just as the other incompatible wife, Manette Salomon, by her heartlessness, separates Coriolis from every natural friend and kills his artistic soul.<sup>2</sup>

In *Fromont Jeune et Risler aîné*, the dénouement revolves around the visit of Frantz to Sidonie, to prevent her from ruining her husband's fortune in riotous living with Georges Fromont. In order to get Frantz in her power, Sidonie extracts from him a fatal billet-doux, by much the same tactics that Manette Salomon employs to entice Anatole to make love to her.<sup>3</sup> Working seductively on Frantz, Sidonie finally places her hand on his: " ' Frantz . . . Frantz!' et ils restaient là l'un contre l'autre, silencieux et brûlants, bercés par la romance de madame Dobson qui leur arrivait par bouffées à travers les massifs:

Ton amour c'est ma folie.

Hélas! je n'en puis guéri i i i r! . . . ”<sup>4</sup>

Manette Salomon, more boldly, lies invitingly upon a couch in the presence of Anatole. When he seeks to embrace her, she calls for Coriolis: "Ah! mon cher,—ricana Manette,—tu as un ami qui est galant aujourd'hui . . . mais galant!" . . .

"Elle avait ce qu'elle voulait: une histoire qu'elle pouvait empoisonner, une arme traîtresse en réserve pour combattre et tuer quand elle voudrait l'amitié de Coriolis pour Anatole."<sup>5</sup>

Sidonie uses the note which she obtains from Frantz to open a fatal gulf between his brother and himself, leading eventually to the suicide of Risler. As for Anatole, he is driven from the house of Coriolis, the companion of his youth, and the supremacy of the viper Manette Salomon is assured.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Les Femmes d'artistes*, pp. 15-26; cf. *Charles Demailly*.

<sup>2</sup> *Les Femmes d'artistes*, pp. 41-53 ("La Transtévérine"); cf. the concluding chapters of *Manette Salomon* (Edmond et Jules de Goncourt).

<sup>3</sup> *Fromont Jeune et Risler aîné* (1894), pp. 251 ff; cf. *Manette Salomon*, chap. cxiv, pp. 341-43.

<sup>4</sup> *Fromont Jeune et Risler aîné*, p. 232.

<sup>5</sup> *Manette Salomon*, p. 343.

<sup>6</sup> *Manette Salomon*, p. 343; cf. *Fromont Jeune et Risler aîné*, pp. 425 ff. La Merquier resorts to a somewhat similar stratagem when he entraps the unsuspecting Nabab into offering him a picture as a bribe.

The difficulty of collecting a quantity of interesting notes on normal, everyday life led the naturalists to devote considerable attention to diseases. We thus find Daudet, as a faithful disciple of the Goncourts, carefully analyzing his own sufferings. For the description of the death of Elysée Méraut, the faithful tutor of little Zara, exiled heir-apparent to the throne of Illyria, he utilized his own sensations during illness.<sup>1</sup> Like the Goncourts also, he frequented the hospitals in order to collect data upon the patients. A series of four articles, entitled "La vie à l'hôpital," published in an ephemeral medical journal called the *Journal d'Enghien*, were sent to Daudet by Raoul D . . . , the original of Jack. In addition to the material obtained in this way, Daudet made long observations at the bedside of Raoul. Learning, however, that the Goncourts were undertaking a long description of the Charity hospital in *Sœur Philomène*, Daudet decided to make little use of the data which he had collected.<sup>2</sup>

He was attracted toward the field of psychology, especially abnormal psychology, but here he was following in the footsteps of the Goncourts even more than ever. For instance, his *Notes sur la vie* contains a chapter of "Rêves et Hallucinations," which is hardly more extensive than the material in the *Journal* on the same subject.<sup>3</sup> In his investigations of abnormal psychology, he was indebted also to Dr. J. M. Charcot, to whom he dedicated *L'Évangéliste*, and who appears as the great Dr. Bouchereau not only in that novel, but also in *Les Rois en exil* and *Numa Roumestan*.<sup>4</sup> *L'Évangéliste* undoubtedly contains many pathological details due to Daudet's friendship with the great specialist in nervous diseases. The general

<sup>1</sup> *Notes sur la vie*, p. 124; cf. *Les Rois en exil* (1890), pp. 474-80.

<sup>2</sup> *Trente ans de Paris*, pp. 264, 276.

<sup>3</sup> *Notes sur la vie*, pp. 158-76. On p. 173 he speaks of a kind of dream which reminds one of Dickens: "Un des phénomènes les plus étranges du rêve, c'est la participation qu'y a souvent la réalité; les bruits extérieurs très réels se mêlent souvent à l'action rêvée, y jouent un rôle," etc; cf. *Oliver Twist*, ed. Harper & Brothers (1902), p. 67 (chap. ix): ". . . There is a drowsy state, between sleeping and waking, when you dream more in five minutes with your eyes half open, and yourself half conscious of everything that is passing around you, than you would in five nights with your eyes fast closed, and your senses wrapt in perfect unconsciousness. At such times, a mortal knows just enough of what his mind is doing to form some glimmering conception of its mighty powers, its bounding from earth and spurning time and space, when freed from the restraint of its corporeal associate."

<sup>4</sup> *L'Évangéliste*, p. 251; *Les Rois en exil*, chap. xviii, pp. 481-99; *Numa Roumestan*, p. 203. The identification of Bouchereau with Dr. Charcot was indicated by my colleague, Professor D. S. Blondheim.

theme, however, is taken from the Goncourts, the novel being recognized as a direct imitation of *Madame Gervaisais*.<sup>1</sup> The Protestant Mme d'Autheman, by her insidious influence upon Eline Ebsen, whom she induces to separate from her mother, is a worthy rival of the Catholic fanatic who shuts the door in the face of her half-idiot son, Pierre-Charles, at the behest of Father Sibilla.

Thus it would appear already that the naturalistic school, despite its pretensions to the contrary, tends fatally to a restricted field of observation. Nor is it surprising that Daudet is obliged to return frequently to the themes treated by the Goncourts. When we come to consider the materials which seem to be entirely the fruit of his own observations, we shall find him using over and over again the same themes, the same characters, and even the same language. This fact is the more significant because as a precaution against repetition, we are told by his widow, he drew a blue pencil mark through such notes as he used in the composition of his novels.<sup>2</sup>

There are a few examples of the simplest form of repetitions, where the same narrative is published in different volumes. For instance, the story of "Les trois messes basses" is found both in the *Lettres de mon moulin* and in the *Contes du lundi*.<sup>3</sup> "Les Aventures d'un papillon et d'une bête à bon Dieu" appears in *Les Amoureuses* as well as in *Le Petit Chose*.<sup>4</sup>

Sometimes the story takes the form of a brief sketch, which is elsewhere expanded into a novel. Amaury, the poetaster, recites the "Credo de l'amour," charming a circle of silly women, and eloping with the wife of the nurseryman.<sup>5</sup> In *Jack*, "M. le vicomte" Amaury d'Argenton, by pompously declaiming the same lines, "Moi je crois à l'amour comme je crois en Dieu," etc., persuades the "Countess" Ida de Barancy to forsake for him her son Jack and her aristocratic lover.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> René Doumic, *Portraits d'Ecrivains* (1911), I, 281.

<sup>2</sup> Alphonse Daudet, *Notes sur la vie* (Preface by Julia A. Daudet), p. vii.

<sup>3</sup> *Lettres de mon moulin* (Paris, 1895), pp. 211-28; *Contes du lundi* (Paris, 1895), pp. 265-67.

<sup>4</sup> *Les Amoureuses* (1857-61) (Paris, 1912), pp. 122-41; *Le Petit Chose* (1894), pp. 228-35.

<sup>5</sup> *Les Femmes d'artistes*, p. 33 ("Le Credo de l'amour").

<sup>6</sup> *Jack*, p. 98; cf. Jules Lemaitre, *Les Contemporains* (1893), II, 280.

Such examples are sufficiently obvious, and extended comment upon them would be commonplace.<sup>1</sup> There remains, however, a type of repetition in Daudet which apparently has attracted little attention heretofore. I mean his frequent recourse to the same motif. In *Les Rois en exil*, little Prince Zara laughs at his father Christian, ex-king of Illyria, and at his mother Frédérique, the ex-queen, and with a caress brings their foreheads together, as if he understands that he is the only bond of union between the weak, dissolute husband, and the heroic wife. Similarly, it is only because of her child that Rosalie becomes outwardly reconciled to Numa Roumestan, from whom she has separated after he has betrayed her a second time.<sup>2</sup> Villemessant, out of employment and lying to his daughters who do not suspect his poverty, is the model for M. Joyeuse, who is discharged from the banking firm of Hémerlingue et fils.<sup>3</sup> "On se figure le supplice de M. Joyeuse, obligé d'inventer des épisodes, des anecdotes sur le misérable qui l'avait si férocelement congédié après dix ans de bons services. Pourtant il jouait sa petite comédie, de façon à tromper complètement tout le monde. On n'avait remarqué qu'une chose, c'est que le père en rentrant le soir se mettait toujours à table avec un grand appétit. Je crois bien! Depuis qu'il avait perdu sa place, le pauvre homme ne déjeunait plus."<sup>4</sup> In like fashion, the granddaughter of Colonel Jouve is

<sup>1</sup> It might be remarked here that Daudet frequently uses "interlocking" characters, like Balzac, Zola, and others. The "illustre Docteur-Professeur de Schwanthalier" is found in the *Contes du lundi* ("la Pendule de Bougival"), pp. 64-72, as well as in *Tartarin sur les Alpes*, p. 9, etc. M. Bompard, who figures prominently in the latter story (*Tartarin sur les Alpes*, p. 109, and especially pp. 349-65, as well as *Numa Roumestan*, p. 295, etc.), is mentioned also in the *Contes du lundi* ("La Défense de Tarascon," p. 76). The same is the case for the gunsmith Costecalde (*Contes du lundi*, p. 78; cf. *Tartarin de Tarascon*, p. 17; *Tartarin sur les Alpes*, p. 36, etc.), and General Bravida (*Contes du lundi*, p. 80; on p. 81, General Bravida speaks characteristically of *nos lapins*, a term applied particularly to Tartarin; cf. *Tartarin de Tarascon*, p. 22). In fact, the only important omission in "La Défense de Tarascon" is Tartarin himself. In *L'Immortel* figure Colette de Rosen, as well as Christian, king of Illyria, who are among the most important figures in *Les Rois en exil* (*L'Immortel* [1890], pp. 22, 43). Amy Féral, who flirts with Jansoulet, the Nabab, gives a rendezvous to M. de Fagan in *Rose et Ninette*, p. 36. (Cf. *Le Nabab*, p. 498, etc.) The Sautecœur family, inveterate poachers, who play a tragic rôle in *La Petite Paroisse* (p. 189), appear also in *L'Obstacle* (p. 159). Delobelle, the unsuccessful actor, one of the foremost figures in *Fromont Jeune et Risler aîné*, is mentioned in *Jack* (p. 95) as an associate of the *raté* d'Argenton.

<sup>2</sup> *Les Rois en exil*, p. 10; Numa Roumestan (1896), p. 344.

<sup>3</sup> *Trente ans de Paris*, p. 34.

<sup>4</sup> *Le Nabab*, p. 95.

Irma Borel (*Le Petit Chose*, pp. 277-80) raves against the *Petit Chose* exactly as Sapho does against Jean Gaussin, p. 278: "Elle bavait, elle étrangeait"; cf. *Sapho*,



obliged to invent cheerful stories for him, although in the greatest distress herself: "Vous figurez-vous le désespoir de cette pauvre enfant sans nouvelle de son père, le sachant prisonnier, privé de tout, et obligé de le faire parler dans des lettres joyeuses, un peu courtes, comme pouvait en écrire un soldat en campagne, allant toujours en avant dans un pays conquis."<sup>1</sup>

Like Joyeuse, she suffers the pangs of hunger during her ordeal:

"—Comprends-tu cela, petite? nous mangions du cheval!

"Je crois bien qu'elle le comprenait. Depuis deux mois elle ne mangeait pas autre chose."

The young hero of "Le Pape est mort" invents a tale of the death of Pope Pius IX, for purposes of his own. He is well aware that he will be forgiven the next day, so overjoyed will his parents be to learn that the Pope is really still alive.<sup>2</sup> In *Tartarin sur les Alpes*, Bompard, returning to Tarascon, recounts the tragic death of Tartarin exhibiting relics of the deceased mountain-climber to substantiate his story. When Tartarin suddenly appears, the inhabitants are so delighted that no attention is paid to the imposition which has been practiced upon them.

Father Stenne, discovering that his son has betrayed the French army, goes back himself to repair the fault, without so much as looking round as he leaves the room. The old blacksmith, Father Lory, refusing to turn round when his aged wife would call him back, goes as a substitute for his son, who has deserted from the Third Zouaves.<sup>3</sup>

The Nabab, taking voluntarily upon himself the guilt of his worthless brother, when to speak the truth would have saved his fortune and seat in the Chamber of Deputies, is not unlike the Petit Chose, who loses his position in school by shouldering the blame for the gallant adventures of the *maître d'armes*.<sup>4</sup>

ed. Flammarion, p. 314: "Dans l'ombre qui les gagnait, il ne voyait plus que cette figure pâle, levée vers lui, cette bouche ouverte, clamant d'une intarissable plainte." Like Jean Gaussin, the Petit Chose makes ineffectual efforts to break away from his mistress. He actually writes his brother of his intended separation, but "cette lettre ne partit pas" (p. 280).

<sup>1</sup> *Contes du lundi* ("Le Siège de Berlin"), pp. 51, 52.

<sup>2</sup> *Contes du lundi* ("Le Pape est mort"), p. 284; cf. *Tartarin sur les Alpes*, p. 364.

<sup>3</sup> *Contes de lundi* ("L'Enfant Espion"), p. 37; cf. *ibid.* ("Le Mauvais Zouave"), p. 63.

<sup>4</sup> *Le Petit Chose*, pp. 120 and preceding; cf. *Le Nabab*, pp. 413-14.

At the close of "Le Siège de Berlin," Colonel Jouve, who had accompanied Napoleon I on many glorious marches through Germany, cries, as he witnesses the triumphal entry of the enemy into Paris: "Aux armes! . . . aux armes! . . . les Prussiens!" then falls dead with apoplexy.<sup>1</sup> Hornus, the Porte-Drapeau, seeing the beloved banner which he has so often borne to victory in the possession of the enemy, rushes upon the Prussian officer, crying: "Au dra . . . ," but his voice chokes, and he falls in an apoplectic fit.

Repetitions of this kind can doubtless be found in all voluminous writers, although it is perhaps fair to say that they are seldom more abundant than in Daudet and the naturalists. They confirm the conclusion that while theoretically the province of the naturalistic school may be nature in its entirety, as Zola would maintain,<sup>2</sup> practically it is quite as limited as that of most other schools of writers. There remains to be discussed the question whether Daudet's restricted field of observation is compensated for by a correspondingly profound study of human nature. In order to answer that question, let us consider a feature of Daudet's style which is sufficiently distinctive to have received considerable comment. I refer to his use of characteristic phrases or gestures—the *tics* by which one individual is readily distinguished from another. Jules Lemaître asserts that these puppet-like gestures are significant enough to demonstrate that Daudet, contrary to the contention of some critics, was a profound observer of the human heart.<sup>3</sup> Paul Franche<sup>4</sup> and E. Gilbert<sup>5</sup> are among the numerous other critics to emphasize Daudet's use of the *tic* as a means of psychological analysis. Gilbert<sup>6</sup> cites the Alsatian cashier in the house of Fromont Jeune et Risler aîné, who murmurs: "Chai bas gonviance," as he sees the

<sup>1</sup> *Contes du lundi* ("Le Siège de Berlin"), p. 56; cf. *ibid.* ("le Petit Drapeau"), p. 130. The Nabab also dies of apoplexy, when he witnesses the triumph of his adversaries.

<sup>2</sup> E. Zola, *Les Romanciers naturalistes*, p. 285.

<sup>3</sup> J. Lemaître, *Les Contemporains*, IV (1893), 242: "On a dit que les personnages de *l'Immortel* n'étaient que des pantins fort expressifs, qu'ils n'avaient pas de 'dessous.' Ces dessous ne sont pas exprimés, c'est vrai, mais le pantomime de ces véridiques et vivantes marionnettes est si juste que chacun de leurs gestes ou de leurs airs de tête nous révèle leur âme et tout leur passé; et je ne croirai jamais qu'un romancier qui, rien qu'en notant des mouvements extérieurs et de brefs discours, a pu suggérer à M. Brunetière l'idée d'un si beau roman (*Revue des deux mondes* du 1er août), soit un psychologue si insuffisant."

<sup>4</sup> *Op. cit.*

<sup>5</sup> *Op. cit.*

<sup>6</sup> E. Gilbert, *op. cit.*, p. 287.

inevitable approach of disaster; Delobelle, the unsuccessful actor, who repeats "Je n'ai pas de droit de renoncer au théâtre!" and dramatically observes, at the funeral of his daughter: "As-tu remarqué?—Quoi?—Il y a deux voitures de maître!"; the pompous d'Argenton, who recites, "Moi, je crois à l'amour comme je crois en Dieu," in *Jack*; Monpavon, in *Le Nabab*, spotless "dans son plastron impeccable"; and old Peyrotte in *Le Petit Chose*, with his perpetual "C'est bien le cas de le dire . . ."

The list of Gilbert might be extended considerably. For instance, there is the plaintive wail of little King Mâdou: "Si pauvre monde avait pas soupir, pauvre monde étouffer bien sûr."<sup>1</sup> The origin of this expression is indicated in *Trente ans de Paris*: ". . . C'est le soupir humain dont parle la chanson créole, cette soupape qui empêche le monde d'étouffer: 'Si pas té gagné, soupi n'en mouné, mouné ta touffé.' " Again, there is Monpavon in *Le Nabab*, with his incessant *machin, chose, pst*, borrowed from the language of the Duke of Mora.<sup>2</sup> In the same way, the French officers in the story "Mon Képi" have a habit of crying, "Du sang-froid! du sang-froid!" in order to encourage themselves during their periodical camp panics. This expression was also attributed to the intrepid Tartarin, in *Tartarin sur les Alpes*.<sup>3</sup> Other instances are Marc Javel's patronizing words, "Ne l'oubliez pas, jeune homme," which he used to remind his ward, Eudeline Raymond, of the duties of an eldest son. His attitude closely resembled that of d'Argenton, with his perpetual "La vie n'est pas un roman," which glossed over his cruelty toward Jack.<sup>4</sup>

Now, if it be true, as Lemaître and others would contend, that each of these little characteristic remarks and gestures reveals the whole past, the very heart of the man, how are we to differentiate between Monpavon, the Duke of Mora, and the host of satellites

<sup>1</sup> *Jack*, p. 65, etc.; cf. *Trente ans de Paris*, p. 326.

<sup>2</sup> *Souvenirs d'un homme de lettres*, p. 229; cf. *La Fédor* ("Souvenirs d'un Chef de Cabinet"), p. 152; cf. also *Le Nabab*, p. 453: ". . . le vieux sybarite songeait à s'endormir dans une baignoire comme chose . . . machin . . . ps . . . ps . . . ps . . ."

<sup>3</sup> *Contes du lundi* ("Mon Képi"), p. 163; cf. *Tartarin sur les Alpes*, p. 66: "Tartarin, pour se réconforter lui-même et rassurer ces demoiselles, criait en se précipitant et bousculant tout le monde: 'Du sang-froid! du sang-froid!' avec une voix de goëland, blanche, éperdue, une de ces voix comme on en a dans les rêves, à donner la chair de poule aux plus braves."

<sup>4</sup> *Soutien de famille* (1898), p. 29; cf. *Jack*, p. 199, etc.

who all affected the same blasé attitude? What is to distinguish in our minds little King Mâdou from the thousands of Creoles who gave vent to their despair in the same words as he? The ejaculation "Du sang-froid!" may disclose to us the inner workings of the heart of Tartarin, but it discloses just as much about the excitable French officers in the story of "Mon Képi." We may thus be tempted to conclude that the puppet-like remarks and gestures are less significant than has been supposed. The characters so revealed may easily be like Dr. Jenkins, the inventor of the famous *perles*, who probably bears a physical resemblance to one man, while his detestable qualities of heart are taken from quite another.<sup>1</sup>

Indeed Daudet's regular procedure in the creation of his characters was to make, as Montaigne would say, "un fagotage de diverses pièces." He tells us, for example, that all the characters in *Numa Roumestan*, from the central figure himself to little Audi-berte, are constructed in this way.<sup>2</sup>

The method is applied to localities as well: "De même pour Aps en Provence, la ville natale de Numa, que j'ai bâtie avec des morceaux d'Arles, de Nîmes, de Saint-Rémy, de Cavaillon, prenant à l'une ses arènes, à l'autre ses vieilles ruelles italiennes, étroites et cailloutées comme des torrents à sec, son marché du lundi sous les platanes massifs du tour-de-ville," etc.<sup>3</sup> Again he writes: "La maison où je fais naître Numa est celle de mes huit ans, rue Séguier, en face l'Académie de Nîmes; l'école des frères terrorisée par l'illustre Boute-à-Cuire et sa férule marinée dans le vinaigre, c'est l'école de mon enfance, les souvenirs de ma plus lointaine mémoire. 'Oiseaux de prime,' disent les Provençaux."<sup>4</sup>

It is for this reason that Lemaître objects to the episode in *L'Immortel* of Astier-Réhu, member of the Academy, to whom Albin Fage sold worthless manuscripts. Lemaître maintains that the incident was comprehensible enough in the case of the real victim, Emile Chasles, who was a mathematician, and hence an easier prey to the mystifications of Vrain-Lucas than a trained man of letters, such as Astier-Réhu. "M. Daudet," he writes, "parti d'un fait vrai, l'a rendu totalement invraisemblable et faux parce qu'il en a

<sup>1</sup> Zola, *Les Romanciers naturalistes*, p. 323.

<sup>2</sup> *Souvenirs d'un homme de lettres*, p. 51.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

changé toutes les conditions."<sup>1</sup> At the same time, Brunetière defends Daudet, insisting that all romancers have resorted to similar methods for creating their characters, and that as for the incident of Albin Fage, history is full of such impositions, of which even the most skilled have been victims.<sup>2</sup>

It is not my purpose to decide here upon the merits of this controversy. I will grant for the sake of argument the right of any romancer to compose his characters by piecing together features from a number of individuals. I will even allow that there is nothing incongruous in the case of Astier-Réhu, especially as that man of letters is constantly depicted as lacking in the most elementary common-sense. The question which remains is: What becomes of our much-trumpeted realistic method, once the romancer makes such extensive use of arbitrary combinations? Are we not now confronted with the dilemma so well described by Brunetière himself, in his discussion of Daudet's expression *roman d'histoire moderne*? He writes: "Car vous crierez à l'in vraisemblance, et l'on vous répondra que pourtant les choses se sont passées telles que l'historien les raconte,—ou vous crierez à l'inexactitude, et l'on vous répondra que, pour emprunter quelques traits à l'histoire, le romancier n' a pas abdiqué cependant les droits de l'imagination."<sup>3</sup>

And what becomes now of the little gestures and characteristic remarks which afford such a deep insight into the souls of Daudet's heroes? It has been observed that we can hardly distinguish these characters from others who have behaved in the same way, but who doubtless possess quite different souls. However, there remain still the remarks which have been attributed to the proper individual, but only after his nature has been considerably altered by Daudet's avowed method of "un fagotage de diverses pièces." How can we know that the words are any longer so characteristic? Or, granting

<sup>1</sup> J. Lemaitre, *Les Contemporains*, IV (1893), 229; cf. *L'Immortel* (1890), p. 317; " 'La lettre aussi . . . ,' dit Epinchard. Mais dès les premières phrases, on cria: 'Assez . . . assez . . . cela suffit . . . ' Ils en rougissaient maintenant, de cette épître de Rotrou dont l'imposture crevait les yeux. Un pastiche d'écolier, tournures impropres, la moitié des mots ignorés de ce temps-là. Quel aveuglement! comment avaient-ils pu? . . . "

<sup>2</sup> F. Brunetière, "L'Immortel par M. Alphonse Daudet," *Revue des deux mondes*, LXXXVIII (series 3, 1888), 699.

<sup>3</sup> F. Brunetière, "L'Impressionisme dans le roman—Les Rois en exil par M. Alphonse Daudet," *Revue des deux mondes*, XXXVI (3<sup>e</sup> series, 1879), 447."

that they are, is it not the effect of the author's imagination, which Zola insists is so conspicuously lacking, and not of his realism?

What Daudet has succeeded in accomplishing is frequently to give an illusion of reality, due principally to the large number of details which he employs. The method has the disadvantage that where the description of particular features is excessively minute, the image as a whole suffers, and a frequent criticism of Daudet is that his novels often seem rather a collection of scenes than a connected whole. The method succeeds best with his short stories, which need no recommendation here.

In conclusion, let us consider certain characteristics of Daudet's writings which have little or no place in the doctrine of realism, and sometimes seem inconsistent with its fundamental tenets. Perhaps the quality which recommends Daudet to his readers' sympathies more strongly than any other is his class humanitarianism. "Je me sens au cœur," he writes, "je me sens au cœur l'amour de Dickens pour les disgraciés et les pauvres, les enfances mêlées aux misères des grandes villes; j'ai eu comme lui une entrée de vie navrante, l'obligation de gagner mon pain avant seize ans; c'est là, j' imagine, notre plus grande ressemblance."<sup>1</sup> Inspired with such a sentiment of pity for the weak and the oppressed, he takes many of his heroes from among the indigent classes. As has been observed already, from Raoul D . . . . , broken down with toil, as a model, he draws the picture of Jack.<sup>2</sup> La Pouponnière, a farm which supplied children with indigestible goat's milk, furnished him with the idea of Dr. Jenkins' heartless Œuvre de Bethléem, in *Le Nabab*.<sup>3</sup> His enthusiasm almost tempts him away from realism when, in *Fromont Jeune et Risler aîné*, he creates Désirée, "cette enfant, ayant hérité un brin de l'extravagance paternelle, transformé l'exaspération artistique en doux sentimentalisme de femme et d'infirme."<sup>4</sup> He thought first of making her a dressmaker for dolls, so that her taste for elegance and delicacy could find expression,<sup>5</sup> but was distressed to learn that little Jenny Wren, in *Our Mutual Friend* of Dickens, had exactly the same occupation as he had intended for Désirée.<sup>6</sup> It was difficult

<sup>1</sup> *Trente ans de Paris*, pp. 309, 310.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 258, etc.; cf. R. Doumic, *Portraits d'Ecrivains* (1911), I, 285, 286.

<sup>3</sup> Zola, *Les Romanciers naturalistes*, p. 324.

<sup>4</sup> *Trente ans de Paris*, p. 306.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

*Ibid.*, p. 309.

to find any other kind of work that suited the purpose so well, but finally Daudet discovered a little sign on a house in the Rue du Temple: "Oiseaux et Mouches pour Modes,"<sup>1</sup> which solved the difficulty, without too flagrant a departure from realism.

Furthermore Daudet was a poet. It is unnecessary to insist upon the poetic qualities of a story like "La Chèvre de M. Seguin." In his earlier days he even attempted verse, and the little volume of *Les Amoureuses* is said to have been admired by the Empress, whose literary taste was mediocre.<sup>2</sup> The *Contes du lundi* contains a story entitled "Les Fées de France,"<sup>3</sup> in which the author, possessed by a kind of a idealism, seems haunted with the spirit of the good old times. In the midst of "realism," he gives as subtitle to this story "Conte Fantastique."

Indeed, Daudet was frequently tempted to delve into the past for subjects, archpriest of modernism that he was. He acknowledges having a lifelong desire to make a romance about Napoleon I, whom he calls "Empereur du Midi," or, failing in that, to take Talleyrand as a subject.<sup>4</sup> The nearest that he came to gratifying his ambition was in the closing pages of *Port-Tarascon*, where Pascalon persuades Tartarin, a prisoner aboard the English "Tomahawk," that he resembles Napoleon aboard the "Northumberland." It is perhaps noteworthy that it is from the Napoleon of legend that Daudet here delights to draw his incidents.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Trente ans de Paris*, p. 310.

<sup>2</sup> H. D'Almêras, *Avant la gloire* (1902), p. 53.

<sup>3</sup> *Contes du lundi*, pp. 198-203.

<sup>4</sup> E. Faguet, *Propos Littéraires* (4<sup>e</sup> série, 1907), IV, 252, 253; cf. Alphonse Daudet, *Notes sur la vie*, pp. 100, 148, 152, 153.

<sup>5</sup> Note the following passages from *Port-Tarascon*:

" ' Ainsi, tenez, disait-il à son petit Las Cases, Napoléon avait des colères terribles, moi de même . . . ' " (p. 234).

" ' Mais, en y songeant, c'est par l'imagination, leur fougueuse imagination méridionale, que l'Empereur et lui s'étaient le plus ressemblés . . . ' " (p. 235).

" ' Chaque matin, après le déjeuner, Tartarin montait sur le pont et s'installait à une place, toujours la même, pour causer avec Pascalon. ' "

" ' Ainsi Napoléon, à bord du 'Northumberland,' avait son poste favori, ce canon auquel il s'appuyait et qu'on appelait le canon de l'Empereur ' " (p. 239).

" ' —Cela ne m'étonne pas, fit Tartarin simplement, je suis très populaire en Angleterre. ' "

" ' Encore une analogie avec Napoléon ' " (p. 244).

" ' Pascalon, qui savait ses auteurs, racontait qu'à bord du 'Northumberland' Napoléon mangeait à la table de l'amiral. ' "

" ' ' Voilà qui me décide, ' fit aussitôt le Gouverneur ' " (p. 253).

" ' Tout à coup les vins apparurent. Aussitôt lady William quitta la salle, et Tartarin, jetant brusquement sa serviette, se retira à son tour sans saluer, sans s'excuser, conformément à la légende napoléonienne ' " (pp. 256, 257).

*Tartarin de Tarascon*, harking further back into the past, is an avowed imitation of *Don Quixote*.<sup>1</sup> Both heroes set out on their adventures with an elaborate equipment which is altogether out of date. Tartarin mistakes light porters for pirates, as Don Quixote does sheep for the armies of knights. He diets and fasts for hunting, just as Don Quixote feeds on true knight's fare, and that very sparingly. He worships the prostitute Baya, just as his prototype becomes the champion of the vulgar Dulcinea. His first lion turns out to be an ass, as the giants turn out to be windmills. Where the hero of Cervantes drinks the balsam of Fierabras, Tartarin goes through similar spasms by becoming seasick. And always faithful to his method of "un fagotage de diverses pièces," Daudet draws from the prosaic Sancho Panza the characteristics of Tartarin which do not conform to those of the impetuous Don Quixote.

Not only was Daudet influenced, like the Romanticists, by the glamor of the dead past, but he felt a certain antipathy toward the scientific determinism that is the very root of naturalism. In *Soutien de famille* he breaks out into an invective against the laws of heredity, which form the basis of Zola's major work: "Oh! ces lois sinistres de l'hérédité, dont la science est venue assombrir la vie déjà si noire!"<sup>2</sup> The entire play *L'Obstacle* is directed against the same laws. The Conseiller tries, from selfish motives, to prevent the marriage of Didier d'Alein with Madeleine de Rémondry, using every possible argument to prove that the young marquis had inherited the insanity of his father.<sup>3</sup> The dénouement is a complete vindication of Didier, and his happy marriage with Madeleine, who succeeds in eluding her odious guardian.

Thus the "most sincerely realistic" of modern French authors does not, Zola to the contrary, write books which are universal in their appeal. His characters, which he uses over and over again, are restricted to a very definite set of favorite types. The incidents that he is fond of repeating suggest no broader experience than that of a number of writers belonging to the Romantic or the classical school. The simple, recurring motifs of his stories suggest no deep

<sup>1</sup> Daudet frequently compares his hero to Don Quixote in *Tartarin de Tarascon*. For the details in this paragraph I am indebted to Messrs. A. B. Brown and H. E. Smith.

<sup>2</sup> *Soutien de famille*, p. 55.

<sup>3</sup> *L'Obstacle*, p. 159, etc.



acquaintance with the mainsprings of human action. And the little gestures and characteristic remarks, the *tics* which appeal to so many critics, can hardly be said after all to prove anything beyond a rather superficial psychology, not clear enough to distinguish individual traits, and perhaps not realistic at all in many cases.

Yet, if it be true, as has been said, that Thackeray could not have written *Vanity Fair* without Eden in his inner eye, may we not also assume that in the most somber pages of *Jack, Numa Roumestan*, and *L'Evangéliste* Daudet never lost a certain idealism, which tended to counteract the realism to which he had committed himself? Perhaps we could account thus for the comparative innocence of Daudet's works, which makes most of his books safe reading for the young. Perhaps also we might explain in part the secret of his unquestionable charm.

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